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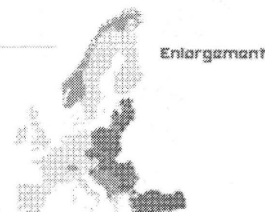
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WEEKLY NEWS
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Welcome to Enlargement Weekly. This weekly bulletin provides an overview of where European Union enlargement has got to, who's doing what in the EU, in the institutions and candidate countries, and how the main challenges are being met.

THE FINAL YEAR OF THE EU-15

The decisions reached in Copenhagen at the end of 2002 mean that, if all goes to plan, 2003 will be the last year in which only the current 15 member states call the shots in the EU. Before the mid-point of next year, the EU map will change dramatically. The familiar contours of an EU consisting only of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK will change forever. The European Union will also incorporate Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

The current EU member states - and the acceding states - are already heavily engaged in the necessary preparations as the New Year opens. Within the EU, preparations ranging from administrative changes in office space to staffing arrangements, from managerial systems to policy formation, are underway to accommodate an enlarged membership. The EU will be implementing the Treaty of Nice, while the discussion on the future of Europe will be reaching a climax and preparations are made to draft a fundamental text, of constitutional character, that will enshrine the EU's principles and its new objectives. And in the acceding states, the pressure is on to complete the reforms still needed before accession - and, in most of them, to win national referenda that will endorse the accession terms agreed at Copenhagen. At the same time, an EU monitoring process will be underway to present a final report on the readiness of the new member states at the end of the year.

The year ahead will see changes too in the way decisions are made within the EU. Once the Accession Treaty is signed - the ceremony is scheduled for April 16 in Athens - the acceding states will participate as observers in virtually all the EU's technical, advisory and policy organs.

In addition, the atmosphere of change will become almost the norm in the EU. Because Bulgaria and Romania will be continuing to press ahead with their own negotiation and integration efforts. Turkey will be seeking to secure a

favourable report on reforms that will allow it to start negotiations in 2005. And the countries of the Western Balkans will be jostling to win the status of candidate too - with Croatia already promising to submit its formal application for EU membership right at the start of 2003.

GREECE PUTS ENLARGEMENT AT THE TOP OF THE PRESIDENCY AGENDA

The priorities of the Greek Presidency of the EU, which runs from January to the end of June 2003, put "Enlargement: the Accession Treaty and the day after" right at the top of the agenda. "The greatest enlargement in the history of the EU, an enlargement that will erase the artificial division of Europe and unify societies and economies that operated for decades under completely different systems, represents a challenge that will not disappear once negotiations have been completed and the decision on accession has been made. The Greek Presidency will do its utmost to keep to the timetable and facilitate the gradual integration of the new member states into the Community process", says the Presidency programme.

The first priority of the Greek Presidency will be to secure the timetable for the accession of the ten candidate countries according to the Copenhagen decisions. The drafting of the new Treaty must be completed, the opinion of the Commission must be received and the assent of the European Parliament and the approval of the Council must also be given. Moreover, if the settlement of the political problem in Cyprus is achieved before completing the Accession Treaty, the Treaty will accommodate the agreed terms in line with the principles on which the EU is founded.

The Presidency sees enlargement as colouring the approach to many EU policies. It says "the further implementation of the Lisbon Strategy and the Spring Summit in 2003 will take place within a new political and economic context, bringing major challenges as well as opportunities. The political and economic uncertainties, with regard to growth and stability in Europe and the world, will be offset by a European currency, which has proved to be one of the world's strongest, and by the prospect of the EU's enlargement".

At the European Council in June, the Presidency plans to have "the first in-depth debate about the Future of Europe, based on the proposals of the Convention. The questions that were raised in Laeken concern both the future of the institutions and the future of the enlarged Union's policies", it says.

Similarly for the Union's policy on immigration, asylum and the management of external borders. "Community policies in this area have so far not matched the magnitude of the immigration phenomenon that we are facing. The operation of the single market, including the free movement of workers, means that we have common responsibilities. At Seville we adopted decisions that will have to be implemented before the European Council in Thessaloniki", the Presidency says.

The Presidency will also implement the new, enhanced pre-accession strategy for Bulgaria and Romania, as well as aiming to close the remaining chapters of the community acquis. And enhanced support for Turkey - and a new Accession Partnership - will be paralleled by analysis of the degree of implementation of Turkey's legislative initiatives to meet the Copenhagen criteria.

Greece is also emphasising inclusion in its agenda: its chosen theme of "Our Europe" belongs, it says, "to all European peoples without exceptions or exclusions. Everybody has a stake in such a future. Enlargement brings this vision much closer. 'Our Europe' welcomes the new member states, confident of achieving a new synthesis and a new dynamism; the sort of dynamism that these states have shown during their rapid social, political and economic transition. It is up to us all to make enlargement a catalyst for accelerating European integration; a force which will ensure that Europe is able to face the challenges of a new era in world affairs."

In external relations, the Presidency will concentrate its efforts on "regions of immediate proximity": it says "the Balkans, the Mediterranean area and the Middle East, Russia and the countries of the Black Sea demand our constant attention in the interests of safeguarding peace and democracy. They offer, at the same time, major opportunities for mutual benefits in the economic sector."

"Finally", says Greece, "we consider enlargement as a leap towards European integration and under no circumstances should it be allowed to create new dividing lines. Our aim is that enlargement serves as a point of departure for building stronger relations in the wider European space from Russia to the Mediterranean, based on common values and economic interests."

PRODI LOOKS AHEAD TO FURTHER ENLARGEMENT

Speaking in Athens after the traditional Commission-Presidency meeting on January 10, European Commission President Romano Prodi looked beyond the upcoming year at what further enlargements might bring. Addressing himself particularly to the future of the Balkans, he said: "We need to show the doors of Europe are open". The Balkans, he said clearly, are part of Europe, and eventually all of them can become members. Croatia - which is planning to submit an EU membership application in the coming weeks - "is part of Europe; it's quite clear", he said. "We must start this process", he said - claiming it was "a Commission priority shared by the Greek Presidency".

But the Commission President added that the process would still depend on each country being judged on its own merits, so the Balkan states would probably not join as a group. "There is an application procedure which lasts some years - these things all take time" - and there are differences in economic development across the countries of the Balkans, he noted. Nevertheless, he said, there is "hope engendered by the prospect of EU membership, and their economies have moved on".

"All European countries if they so want can accede at the right time as long as they meet the right conditions", Prodi went on. "We want members which accept our principles, the rule of law, economic and social conditions that allow them to participate in European development", he said. He made clear, though, that there are "there are geographical, political and cultural borders" that will define how far the process can go.

ENLARGEMENT MAKES TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE REVIEW URGENT

A new high-level group of EU and candidate country experts on transport met in Brussels on 10 January to set in motion an urgent review of transport infrastructure needs in the light of impending EU enlargement. The new group, chaired by former European Commission Vice-President Karel Van Miert, is to help identify the priority projects for the trans-European network in the enlarged EU.

It has been set up by the Commission Vice-President responsible for transport and energy, Loyola de Palacio. The group, with one representative from each member state and from each of the 12 countries set to join the Union by 2007 (as well as one representative of the European Investment Bank), will have to identify a limited number of priority projects on the major corridors which will carry the heavy flows of traffic between the States in the enlarged Union.

In spring 2003 the group will recommend a list of priority projects to the Commission. The projects selected will have to contribute to substantially improving traffic conditions on the major trans-frontier corridors, to removing bottlenecks on the main routes or to promoting interoperability between the regional networks, taking due account of the environment. The Group will

Enlargement of the European Economic Area to match EU enlargement is a legal requirement under the European Economic Area Agreement, signed in 1992 by the EU member states and all the European Free Trade Association countries except Switzerland (which stayed outside the EEA). So all the new EU member states are obliged to join the EEA at the same time as they join the EU. The aim is to complete the talks so that a new agreement can be signed at the planned signing ceremony for the EU Accession Treaty, in Athens on April 16, thus allowing parallel ratification of both instruments at national level.

Preparing for more traffic at Warsaw airport

The European Investment Bank is lending €200 million to the Polish state-owned airports authority, *Przedsiębiorstwo Porty Lotnicze*, to help pay for a new passenger terminal at Warsaw International Airport. The new terminal will more than double capacity to approximately 10 million passengers a year, to deal with expected growth up to at least 2010. The EIB already provided €50 million for upgrading a decade ago - but passenger traffic has grown at rates exceeding forecasts since. EIB-Vice President Roth said the expansion "will enable the airport to meet existing and rapidly rising demand for air transport in Poland, as the country's economy develops. In so doing the project will contribute to Poland's integration to the EU, and to strengthening transport links between the EU and Poland within the trans-European transport network." Nearly two-thirds of the €1 billion the EIB has lent Poland has been allocated to transport schemes.

"No questions" over Cyprus' accession.

Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis rejected any suggestion of hesitancy over Cyprus' future membership of the EU when he spoke in Athens on January 10, after the Presidency meeting with the European Commission. "In Copenhagen there was a unanimous decision that Cyprus will become a member of the European Union, and this decision was taken in accordance with the Helsinki conclusions", he insisted. "On the basis of these two decisions we proceed", he went on. If there is no solution of the political problem, the Republic of Cyprus will sign the Accession Treaty and the *acquis* will not apply in the northern part of the island. "But", he promised, "Greece will undertake every possible step to achieve agreement. Negotiations are necessary. Both sides wish to have negotiations. But up to now there are difficulties on the Turkish Cypriot side. They say they want to talk, but they have not begun".

Gliding gently through Hungary

Hungary should see cleaner trams and better sewers over the coming years following a new agreement with the European Commission's ISPA programme and the European Investment Bank. EIB is to lend €395 million for transport and environmental projects, and the ISPA programme is providing co-financing. €195 million will go into road and rail rehabilitation works throughout Hungary, as well as environmental schemes, including several sewerage networks and water treatment facilities as well as solid waste disposal facilities. The City of Budapest is to receive €125 million to upgrade its underground Metro Line 2 and €75 million for buying 40 new tramcars. The loans brought total EIB lending in Hungary in 2002 to €515 million.

Enlargement Mini-Briefs

- Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis said on January 10 that he hoped that after signature of the Accession Treaty, the acceding member states "will take part in all discussions and express their views and in this way take part in decisions".

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is to back renovation of more than five kilometres of the tram tracks in central Gdansk. The Mayor of the city is currently seeking bids to carry out the work.
- Slovakia launched a new framework for secured credit transactions at the start of 2003, overcoming problems of delay and uncertainty that have been hampering access to credit. The EBRD acted as advisor to the office of the deputy Prime Minister for economy for the project, which was largely funded by the UK's Department for International Development.
- The President of the European Commission, Romano Prodi, congratulated the new President of Lithuania, Rolandas Paksas, on his early-January election: "Your election comes at a truly historical moment in which Lithuania has successfully completed its negotiations on accession to the European Union", he said, promising "The Commission will continue to wholeheartedly support Lithuania in this important stage".
- The European Union and Poland have concluded a new agreement to further liberalise trade in agricultural products. This completes these so-called "double-profit" talks with all of the central European candidate countries, a major step in preparing all sides for EU accession and the single market. For Poland, the deal involves improvements in existing concessions in a range of areas including live bovine animals, dairy products, sour cherries, preserved cucumbers and gherkins and addresses new concessions for meat and potato preparations. The new concessions will be effective from April 2003.
- The European Economic and Social Committee is aiming to help bring organised civil society in the candidate countries into the discussions on the future of Europe with seminar in Brussels on 30-31 January. It will provide candidate country civil society organisations with a structured channel for expressing and promoting their views on the future of Europe, and give practical expression to the Convention's expectations about involving civil society from the candidate countries in the debate on the future of Europe.

Agenda

See also the new "Enlargement events calendar" on the DG Enlargement web site at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/enlargement/events/calendar.htm>. This gives a run-down of public events related to the enlargement of the EU taking place in all current and future member states.

Date	Event
January 2003	
Details tbc	■ Presidential elections, Czech Republic
Sunday 5th	■ Lithuanian Presidential elections
Tuesday 14th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis discusses with the European Parliament the programme for his country's Presidency of the EU over the first half of 2003; Strasbourg ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
Wednesday 15th	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ European Commission statement on the Northern Dimension, European Parliament, Strasbourg ■ Candidates and acceding states take part in Troika meeting of the EU Political and Security Committee ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on south-east Europe meets, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on the Accession Treaty meets, Brussels ■ EU Council of Ministers working group on the

Thursday
16th

- Western Balkans meets, Brussels
- Candidate countries take part in EU Troika meeting on eastern Europe and central Asia
- Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society, meets the Slovene minister for the information society, Paval Gantar, Brussels.
- Franz Fischler, European Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries takes part in a debate on EU enlargement and agriculture reform, Berlin
- European Parliament debates the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Strasbourg
- European Parliament President Pat Cox meets the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development President, Jean Lemierre, Strasbourg
- EU Council of Ministers working group on the Western Balkans meets, Brussels
- EU Council of Ministers working group on the Accession Treaty meets, Brussels
- EU Council of Ministers working group on EFTA meets, Brussels

Friday 17th

- European Commission President Romano Prodi meets the Prime Minister of Croatia, Ivica Racan, Brussels.
- EU Council of Ministers working group on south-east Europe meets, Brussels
- Candidate countries take part in EU Troika meeting on United Nations, Brussels
- EU Council of Ministers working group on enlargement meets, Brussels
- European Commission Enterprise directorate general workshop (in Brussels) on rule changes as EU candidates bring their requirements for industrial goods into line with the EU single market - under the protocols to the Europe Agreement on Conformity Assessment and the Acceptance of Industrial Products (PECAs). PECAs already cover trade worth € 18 billion with Hungary and € 14 billion with the Czech Republic. Similar agreements have recently been signed with Lithuania and Latvia, and initialled with Estonia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

Tuesday 21st

- European Commission Enterprise directorate general conference on EU industrial policy and the challenges of EU enlargement, with European Commission President Romano Prodi and Erkki Liikanen, European Commissioner for Enterprise and the Information Society, Brussels

Monday 27th

- General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels

**February
2003**

9th and 16th

- Presidential, elections, Cyprus

Monday 24th

- Commissioner Erkki Liikanen visit Hungary
- General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels.

March 2003

Sunday 2nd

- Estonian national election

Wednesday
5th

- Parliamentary elections, Estonia

Tuesday 18th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels

Friday 21st ■ European Council, Brussels

April 2003

Saturday 12th ■ Referendum in Hungary on EU accession

Monday 14th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg

Wednesday 16th ■ Signature of the Accession Treaty, Athens
■ European Conference, Athens

May 2003

Friday 2nd ■ Informal foreign affairs ministers meeting, Greece

Monday 19th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Brussels

Saturday 31st ■ EU-Russia summit, St Petersburg

June 2003

Friday 6th and Saturday 7th ■ Referendum on the accession treaty, Slovakia

Sunday 15th and Monday 16th ■ Referendum on the accession treaty, Czech Republic

Tuesday 17th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg

Friday 20th ■ European Council, Thessaloniki
■ Zagreb process summit, Thessaloniki

Tuesday 24th ■ General Affairs and External Relations Council, Luxembourg

July/August 2003

Details tbc ■ Presidential elections (elected by the parliament), Latvia

2004

May 2004

Saturday 1st ■ Entry into force of the accession treaty (according to conclusions of General Affairs Council, 18.11.02)

ENLARGEMENT WEEKLY is prepared for the Information Unit of the Enlargement Directorate General of the European Commission. As part of its communication strategy on enlargement, the Commission makes this bulletin publicly available. Comments are welcome and should be addressed by e-mail to enlargement@cec.eu.int.

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